United Nations A/56/202

General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 July 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Items 142 and 145 of the provisional agenda*

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions

Note by the Secretary-General**

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the attention of the General Assembly, the attached report, conveyed to him by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, on the audit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations policies and procedures for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions.

2. The Secretary-General takes note of the findings and concurs with the recommendations made in the present report, which will guide the implementation of the new global staffing strategy for peacekeeping operations. The Secretary-General is also pleased to note that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management are working together to improve the policies and procedures for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions.

* A/56/150.
** Finalization of the present report was delayed because official comments on the draft report were not received on a timely basis.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions

Summary

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the policies and procedures of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the recruitment of international civilian staff for peacekeeping and other special missions. The audit reviewed selected mission appointments processed by the Department's Personnel Management and Support Service between January 1999 and October 2000 — a period during which the Service processed approximately 4,000 appointments for posts in 45 field missions/offices. The emergence of new missions during this period, including the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET), the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), combined with the rapid expansion of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), placed additional demands on the capacity of the Personnel Management and Support Service to respond to the staffing needs of field missions.

OIOS identified shortcomings in the recruitment process and in the management of recruitment functions by the Personnel Management and Support Service. The absence of benchmarks and proper analysis of workload affected the Service's ability to realistically assess its resource requirements. The functionality of the candidate roster was limited and standard job descriptions for mission posts were yet to be fully developed. The selection process did not ensure that candidates were selected competitively. There were inconsistencies in determining the salary levels of selected candidates and reference checks of their qualifications and experience had not been conducted in most cases.

The recruitment practices and procedures of the Department need to be substantially improved to enhance transparency and to more effectively meet the staffing needs of field missions. Partly due to the Personnel Management and Support Service's limited ability to quickly and fully respond to the staffing needs of large field missions, the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809) recommended the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions. OIOS fully supports this proposal, which enhances the ability of field missions to achieve their mandated goals. However, the full delegation of recruitment authority should be preceded by the establishment of recruitment standards, the deployment of qualified recruitment specialists in the affected missions and the implementation of appropriate monitoring mechanisms at Headquarters.

OIOS made a number of recommendations to strengthen the recruitment process and enhance transparency, which included the following:

- The Office of Human Resources Management should implement an effective monitoring mechanism to ensure that the recruitment authority delegated to the

Department of Peacekeeping Operations is exercised with transparency and in accordance with the human resources policies of the Organization;

- To facilitate the recruitment of the best available candidates, the Personnel Management and Support Service should establish a functional roster of qualified, pre-screened candidates. Suitable candidates should be short-listed from the roster to select the best available personnel for the respective posts. Selection decisions should be delegated to field missions in accordance with the Organization's human resources policies;

- The Service should develop standard job descriptions for all posts in peacekeeping and other special missions. These should be posted on the Department's web site to assist candidates seeking opportunities for mission service;

- To promote transparency and fairness in determining the salary levels of mission appointees, the Personnel Management and Support Service should apply the grading criteria consistently and record reasons for deviations from these criteria;

- The Service should ensure that reference checks of candidates' educational qualifications and work experience are completed before they are appointed for mission service. If this is not always possible, owing to administrative exigencies, reference checks should be completed before extending initial appointments;

- To improve the management of recruitment functions, the Service should strengthen its requests for resources by fully justifying its posts based on reliable workload indicators and benchmarks and by presenting a risk analysis highlighting the potential impact of lower resource levels;

- The Personnel Management and Support Service should prepare written procedures for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions to ensure transparency and consistency;

- The Department should deploy qualified human resources specialists and provide necessary training to existing recruitment staff in the respective field missions before recruitment authority is fully delegated.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management agreed with the report's recommendations and are working together to strengthen the policies and procedures for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–5	5
II.	Delegation of recruitment authority to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations	6–10	5
III.	The recruitment process	11–27	6
	A. Roster of candidates for mission appointment	11–14	6
	B. Job descriptions for mission posts	15–16	7
	C. Evaluation and selection of candidates	17–18	7
	D. Determination of salary levels	19–22	8
	E. Reference checks	23–25	8
	F. Travel arrangements	26–27	9
IV.	Management of the recruitment function	28–46	9
	A. Staff resources during the period from 1995 to 2001	28–37	9
	B. Written procedures for mission appointment	38–40	11
	C. Benchmarking and performance evaluation	41	12
	D. Segregation of duties	42–43	12
	E. Documentation in personnel files	44	13
	F. Analysing staff turnover	45–46	13
V.	Results of client satisfaction survey	47–49	13
VI.	Recommendations	50–81	14

I. Introduction

1. The Personnel Management and Support Service within the Field Administration and Logistics Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is responsible for anticipating, identifying and meeting the civilian personnel requirements of field missions and ensuring their efficient deployment, administration and management. As of November 2000, the authorized strength of international civilian staff for all field missions was 5,003 posts. During the period January 1999 to October 2000, the Personnel Management and Support Service processed 4,055 appointments for 45 field missions/offices, out of which approximately 2,300 related to two large and complex missions — the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET). The emergence of these two "governance missions" within a few months of each other posed a major challenge to the Service in terms of its capacity to quickly identify and deploy qualified personnel, particularly in those occupational groups for which it had little or no prior recruitment experience.

2. The Personnel Management and Support Service partly succeeded in deploying the personnel needed to implement the complex mandates of these missions. However, problems such as the unsuitability of the personnel deployed and high staff turnover — combined with the rapid expansion of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the establishment of new missions, including the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) — placed additional demands on its capacity to respond to the staffing requirements of field missions.

3. The experiences gained from recruiting large complements of international civilian staff in specialized occupational groups provide valuable insight for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in its development of a global staffing strategy, as recommended by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations.[1] The results of the OIOS audit should enable the Department to strengthen its recruitment policies and procedures so as to meet future challenges more effectively.

4. The objectives of the OIOS audit were to determine whether the Department's current policies and procedures: (a) ensure the effective and efficient management of recruitment; (b) enhance recruitment of the best qualified candidates, promote transparency and provide sufficient information to candidates; and (c) satisfy the staffing needs of the field missions. The audit focused on the recruitment of international civilian staff under appointments of limited duration (300 series of the Staff Rules) for peacekeeping and other special missions.

5. OIOS examined the recruitment process and reviewed 213 mission appointments for 20 different missions that were processed by the Personnel Management and Support Service from January 1999 to October 2000. This number represented about 5 per cent of the total number of mission appointments made during the period. OIOS also used a questionnaire to obtain feedback from 10 major field missions to assess the quality of the staffing support provided to them by the Personnel Management and Support Service. The comments received from the Department and the Office of Human Resources Management on the audit findings and recommendations are shown in italics.

II. Delegation of recruitment authority to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

6. In 1994, the Department requested the delegation of administrative authority from the then Department of Administration and Management regarding various functions relating to peacekeeping operations. The Department reasoned that the managers most directly responsible for the work programme should be provided with the maximum operational authority to accomplish the work. Following detailed consultations between the two Departments, the Office of Human Resources Management progressively delegated administrative authority to the Department.

7. In January 1995, the Personnel Management and Support Service assumed the delegated authority for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions. An OIOS inspection[2] conducted in January 1995 expressed "concerns about the ability of the Division/Department to discharge the resulting additional responsibilities effectively in the immediate future" and recommended that the situation be kept under close

scrutiny, in particular by the Office of Human Resources Management, during the initial six-month period.

8. In April 1995, the Department of Administration and Management, in a decision arising from the delegation of authority to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, called upon the Office of Human Resources Management to: (a) monitor compliance by the Personnel Management and Support Service with United Nations human resources policies, rules and regulations; and (b) conduct sample checks of procedures and practices. The delegation of authority was to remain in effect for an initial period of one year, during which the Department was required to submit a mid-term report providing an assessment of its implementation. The Office of Human Resources Management reserved the right to visit the Department or the mission sites to carry out inspections, as it deemed appropriate.

9. During the one-year period following the delegation of authority, the Department submitted three reports to the Department of Administration and Management describing the successful implementation of the delegation of authority. However, the Office of Human Resources Management did not conduct any independent evaluations. *The Office acknowledged that no effective monitoring had taken place, primarily due to resource constraints and other urgent priorities.* In the opinion of OIOS, many of the problems discussed in the present report could have been more proactively addressed if the Office of Human Resources Management had exercised an effective and visible monitoring role.

10. The need for a monitoring mechanism has become even more important since the issuance of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,[1] which recommends the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions. Since the primary responsibility for monitoring the implementation of delegated recruitment authority rests with the Office of Human Resources Management, oversight arrangements need to be instituted before the delegation to field missions takes place. This should include periodic checks of recruitment cases processed by the Personnel Management and Support Service and by the respective field missions to which recruitment authority has been delegated. *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed that an effective monitoring mechanism should be developed, but noted that it was difficult to establish such a mechanism using traditional tools and existing resources. However, the Office clarified that the new "web-enabled" integrated system (the "Galaxy project") being developed in partnership with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would allow for continuous monitoring.*

III. The recruitment process

A. Roster of candidates for mission appointment

11. According to the allocation of responsibilities established in April 1995, the Office of Human Resources Management was to transfer a functional recruitment/placement roster designed to meet the specific staffing needs of peacekeeping operations to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, thereby enabling the Personnel Management and Support Service to undertake roster searches and maintain a current roster. However, no such roster was transferred by the Office of Human Resources Management — only boxes containing applications from candidates were handed over to the Personnel Management and Support Service. The Office's involvement, if any, in assisting the Service to develop a functional roster was minimal.

12. The Service subsequently took the initiative in developing a "peacekeeping database", which included a roster module. As of January 2001, the personal histories of some 24,400 candidates had been logged in the system. However, approximately 80 per cent of these pertained to applications received from 1995 to 1999, most of which were of little value, as they were out of date. Furthermore, the applications logged in the system had not been vetted by a qualified human resources officer to determine the candidates' suitability. Thus, the roster had little practical use and the process for identifying candidates for mission appointment remained ad hoc, with little assurance of selecting the best available personnel. *The former Chief of the Personnel Management and Support Service commented that identifying candidates for mission appointment may have appeared to be ad hoc, but that such decisions, based on sound judgement by experienced staff, were taken in the best interests of the Organization in situations where considerable pressure was exerted to recruit candidates in the shortest*

possible time. OIOS believes that a functional, up-to-date roster would greatly assist in the timely selection of candidates based on objective criteria, especially when there is pressure to immediately deploy civilian staff to field missions.

13. To facilitate the expeditious recruitment of the best available candidates, the Personnel Management and Support Service needs to establish an Internet/Intranet-based roster of qualified, pre-screened candidates for field missions. The Office of Human Resources Management has designed such a roster (the "Galaxy project"), which can receive applications online, screen them on the basis of established criteria and automatically rank candidates in accordance with job requirements. This roster also enables applicants to update their personal histories from time to time. The Personnel Management and Support Service indicated that this roster, with some modifications, would meet their requirements. Since such an online system may not be accessible to all potential candidates worldwide, the need for receiving and processing hard-copy applications cannot be eliminated entirely. However, the capacity to receive and process applications online would significantly reduce the volume of hard-copy applications, thereby making the maintenance of the roster less labour-intensive.

14. In the opinion of OIOS, closer cooperation between the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is crucial for the full development of the roster to suit the needs of peacekeeping operations. *The Office of Human Resources Management commented that, within the context of the "Galaxy project", the Office and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations intend to develop and implement a fundamentally new roster system for mission appointments that would eliminate the deficiencies of the present system.*

B. Job descriptions for mission posts

15. The responsibilities of the Personnel Management and Support Service include the formulation of standard job descriptions for mission posts. OIOS found that job descriptions were already available for administrative posts in missions as the Personnel Management and Support Service also recruits international civilian staff under the 100 series of Staff Rules for established peacekeeping missions on the basis of vacancy announcements. However, the emergence of "governance missions" such as UNMIK and UNTAET gave rise to new occupational groups (including taxation, public health, engineering and law enforcement specialists) for which no job descriptions have been prepared. Although generic job descriptions prepared by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) were available for many of these "new" occupational groups, the Personnel Management and Support Service had not used them. To meet the immediate operational needs of UNMIK and UNTAET, the Service solicited candidates from Member States under broad job categories. However, its ability to evaluate the suitability of these candidates was limited owing to the absence of job descriptions. This situation was exacerbated by pressure to immediately deploy civil administrators in the missions.

16. The absence of standard job descriptions significantly limited the ability of the Personnel Management and Support Service to make informed recruitment decisions. This also limited the candidates' knowledge of the competencies and skills required for the job. In the opinion of OIOS, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations needs to post standard job descriptions on its web site in order to assist candidates seeking opportunities for mission service.

C. Evaluation and selection of candidates

17. In order to promote fairness and transparency in the recruitment process and to ensure the selection of the best available candidates, recruitment practices should provide for the shortlisting of several eligible candidates for a post (or a cluster of posts) as a basis for competitive evaluation and selection. However, OIOS could not find evidence to indicate that the candidates recruited by the Personnel Management and Support Service had been selected on a competitive basis. The Service's evaluation and selection practices appeared to be ad hoc since there was no paper trail to establish that selection decisions were driven by a comparative assessment of competing candidates.

18. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations agreed that selection decisions should be based on an evaluation of competing candidates. However, the pressure to deploy staff immediately and the subjective judgement involved in recruitment may not always result in selecting the best candidates. The former Chief of the Personnel Management and Support Service commented that, while procedures for*

shortlisting candidates already exist, they were not systematically applied due to the urgency of deploying staff. He further stated that, had the procedures been strictly followed, the process, which was already too slow, would have resulted in further delays. However, in the opinion of OIOS, the Service's attempts to accelerate the recruitment process should have ensured that competitive and transparent selection of the best available candidates was not compromised.

D. Determination of salary levels

19. Since the Personnel Management and Support Service does not issue vacancy announcements when recruiting international civilian staff against posts in special missions, the salary level (grade/step) of a selected candidate is determined on the basis of educational qualifications and work experience, subject to the level of the post in the mission's staffing table. In determining the salary level, the Service uses a matrix provided by the Office of Human Resources Management that indicates the appropriate salary level for the candidate's qualifications and years of experience. The various combinations of qualifications and experience indicated in the matrix are generally consistent with the criteria indicated in the Office's vacancy announcements for posts at comparable levels.

20. The audit showed, however, that the Personnel Management and Support Service did not consistently apply the criteria for determining the salary levels of mission appointees. Of the 213 cases reviewed, 67 recruits were under-graded and 9 recruits were over-graded. In seven other cases, OIOS could not determine the appropriateness of the recommended salary level based on available documentation. While it is accepted that salary levels should not be determined mechanically, deviations from established criteria not only raise concerns about the fairness of the process but also cause morale problems. OIOS could not find any documentation supporting these deviations.

21. In late 2000, UNMIK requested the Personnel Management and Support Service to raise the salary levels of many mission appointees on the ground that, although all the appointees met the criteria for the posts, their initial appointment was at a lower level owing either to the unavailability of a higher post at the time of recruitment, or to their appointment at a trainee level. OIOS noted, however, that there was no consistent policy concerning the initial appointment of new recruits at the trainee level. Furthermore, if a lower salary level was recommended due to the non-availability of an appropriate post at the time of initial appointment, the concerned mission appointees should have been adequately compensated by granting them a higher step in their respective grades. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations agreed that a considerable number of mission staff had been under-graded at the time of their initial appointment. In February 2001, field missions were asked to constitute review committees to recommend revised salary levels in deserving cases based on established guidelines.*

22. *The former Chief of the Personnel Management and Support Service commented that, since the initial grading was done under time constraints based on paper evaluations and without reference checks, it was prudent to be conservative. He further stated that if new information was provided in support of a review of the salary level after deployment to a mission, or if a candidate proved to be an exceptional performer after a substantial period of time or assumed a higher level of responsibilities, a careful review of the salary level was undertaken.* In the opinion of OIOS, since the 300 series of the Staff Rules does not provide for promotional reviews, the initial salary level should be determined by applying the grading criteria consistently and by properly documenting the reasons for any deviation from these criteria. In addition, a proper system needs to be instituted for dealing with mission appointees' requests for review of salary levels established upon their initial appointment.

E. Reference checks

23. Since the candidates' evaluation and the determination of their salary level are made based on assertions in their curriculum vitae or personal history forms, reference checks of key elements such as educational qualifications and work experience should be an important part of the recruitment process. Reference checks are also important to ensure that candidates do not secure mission appointments by misstating material information.

24. The audit found that, prior to January 2000, the Personnel Management and Support Service had not performed any reference checks. Although a staff member was subsequently assigned exclusively to this task, reference checks were still not conducted in most cases. Of the 213 recruitment cases reviewed during

the audit, reference checks were required for 199 recruits (the remaining 14 recruits did not require reference checks because they were United Nations staff members from established offices). The Service had initiated the checks in 93 cases but even these were partially completed: in 17 cases the inquiries related only to educational background, while in 12 other cases the inquiries were limited to work experience. No responses were received for 49 recruits. In effect, full reference checks had been completed for only 15, or less than 8 per cent, of the 199 cases reviewed. All 199 recruits were already on board and, in most cases, their initial appointments had been extended.

25. OIOS believes that ideally the Personnel Management and Support Service needs to perform reference checks before a candidate is pre-selected and placed on the roster. If this is not always feasible due to the volume of applications or to other administrative exigencies, the verification process should be completed before a formal letter of appointment is issued. In urgent cases, the Service must ensure that the verification process is completed before the initial appointment is extended for a further period. *The former Chief of the Service commented that while reference checks should be performed, extensive checks may not be possible when operational demands dictate re-ordering of work priorities. He further stated that, in the case of candidates recommended by Member States, it was assumed that their references had been checked by the respective Member States. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has since agreed that reference checks will be conducted in all cases.*

F. Travel arrangements

26. The Travel Unit of the Personnel Management and Support Service manages travel arrangements for selected candidates from their place of recruitment to their respective mission areas. This process involves contacting the selected candidates, finalizing their itineraries and flight reservations, issuing a United Nations laissez-passer and arranging for transit/entry visas. In the sample cases reviewed, OIOS noted that the time taken for making these arrangements (that is, from the date of acceptance of the offer of appointment to the date of the recruit's arrival in the mission area) ranged from 15 days to 3 months and averaged approximately 41 days per case, which, in the opinion of OIOS, appeared to be high. According to the assessment carried out by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in October 2000, there was a backlog of 400 recruits, many of whom had been selected over two months earlier, waiting for travel arrangements. The functioning of field operations had been affected by the backlog.

27. In the opinion of OIOS, the Personnel Management and Support Service, in order to facilitate quicker deployment of field staff, should increasingly delegate the task of arranging the travel of international civilian staff to field missions, whenever economical and feasible.

IV. Management of the recruitment function

A. Staff resources during the period from 1995 to 2001

28. The OIOS analysis of the Personnel Management and Support Service's staff resources for the period from 1995 through 2001 showed that the Service had generally been provided with the staff resources sought from the support account for peacekeeping operations. The only significant exception was in October 2000[3] when the Department of Peacekeeping Operations sought additional resources to implement the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations.[1] The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions only partly authorized the additional posts, pending further review. In the opinion of OIOS, this shortfall in authorized posts should not materially affect the operations of the Personnel Management and Support Service, since the delegation of recruitment authority to field missions should considerably reduce its workload. The number of posts requested for the Service and the number of posts authorized by the Advisory Committee between 1995 and 2001 under Professional and General Service categories are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1
Personnel Management and Support Service staff resources during the period from 1995 to 2001

	Proposed strength			*Authorized strength*		
Year	*Professional*	*General Service*	*Total*	*Professional*	*General Service*	*Total*
1995-1996	17	45	**62**	17	45	**62**
1996-1997	20	45	**65**	20	45	**65**
1997-1998	20	45	**65**	20	45	**65**
1998-1999	18	45	**63**	17	45	**62**
1999-2000	23	48	**71**	23	48	**71**
2000-2001*	37	65	**102**	30	56	**86**

* *Note*: Proposals submitted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in October 2000 (see A/55/507/Add.1) for implementing the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations.

29. When the Department of Peacekeeping Operations asked for the delegation of authority from the Department of Administration and Management in 1994, the then Field Personnel Section, which was a precursor to the Personnel Management and Support Service, consisted of 39 staff (10 Professional, 29 General Service), including 4 staff (1 Professional, 3 General Service) in its Staffing Unit.

30. In November 1994 however, the Department informed the Office of Human Resources Management that, in order to implement the delegated authority, the number of posts for the Field Personnel Section needed to be increased from 39 to 52 (14 Professional and 38 General Service), including 13 posts (4 Professional and 9 General Service) for the Staffing Unit. An internal note prepared by the Department indicated that, in 1994, the Office of Human Resources Management had 15 posts (6 Professional and 9 General Service) for recruiting international civilian staff for field missions.

31. The assessment of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, was that it would be able to implement the delegated recruitment authority with fewer staff than the Office of Human Resources Management had employed at the time for the same function. The conclusions of an OIOS inspection conducted in January 1995 however, were not so optimistic. The OIOS report[4] warned that the inadequacy of staff resources in the Staffing Unit within the Personnel Management and Support Service "poses a serious risk to the Organization", and suggested that some immediate relief be provided to the Service's Staffing Unit.

32. Although the Personnel Management and Support Service attributed many of the shortcomings identified in the present report to the lack of adequate staffing, the figures in table 1 above illustrate that it had been provided with the staff resources requested during the period from 1995 to 2000.

33. The Secretariat's requests for resources from the support account for peacekeeping operations were criticized by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on several occasions,[5] the main criticism being that the information provided was insufficient to justify the requested resources. For example, in the report of the Advisory Committee on support account requirements for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 (A/51/906), the Committee commented that, for the most part, the budget submission did not contain workload statistics in support of the proposed staffing structure and that the mere provision of raw data without a qualitative analysis was of minimum utility. Nevertheless, the resources requested for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were provided in full.

34. The OIOS review showed that the Personnel Management and Support Service had not made a proper determination of its resource requirements based on a meaningful analysis of the existing and/or anticipated workload. This was exacerbated by the

absence of convincing benchmarks to justify the resource requirements based on: (a) the optimal and actual turnaround times for sourcing, evaluating, selecting and deploying international civilian staff to missions; (b) the number of recruitment cases handled by each recruitment officer; (c) time estimates for screening candidates' applications and entering them on the roster; (d) the number of applications to be processed during a year and the number of staff required for clearing backlogs in the processing of applications; and (e) the time and resources required for conducting reference checks. Instead of providing workload statistics to justify the required resources, the Service based its staffing requirements on statements citing its need to: improve and develop generic detailed job descriptions for all categories of personnel required in peacekeeping operations; further develop and refine the applicants roster; and incorporate lessons learned and best staffing/recruitment practices. In some cases, additional posts were requested without explanation.

35. Following the Advisory Committee's repeated criticism, some workload statistics were provided in the budget submissions from 1999 onwards. However, those statistics did not accurately reflect the workload of the Personnel Management and Support Service, in particular that of its Staffing Support Section. For example, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations cited the "peak number of civilian staff", which included locally recruited staff, as a workload indicator. However, the number of locally recruited staff had no direct relevance to the workload of the Staffing Support Section since its main responsibility is to recruit international civilian staff.

36. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations clarified that proposals for additional resources were not made owing to the limited likelihood of obtaining them in view of the drastic reduction of peacekeeping activities during 1998. When the situation suddenly changed in 1999, additional resources were sought keeping in mind the prevailing operational requirements and also what could realistically be requested. The former Chief of the Personnel Management and Support Service commented that internal discussions held by Departmental Management prior to formal budget submissions had always resulted in reducing the staffing requests to the bare minimum, owing to the "zero growth budget".* In the opinion of OIOS, the resource requirements for the Personnel Management and Support Service should be based on reliable workload statistics and the possible consequences arising from lower resource levels should be clearly spelled out. This is particularly important since the capacity of field missions to successfully implement their mandates depends to a great extent on the quality of personnel recruited by the Service's Staffing Support Section.

37. A significant proportion of Professional staff members handling recruitment functions in the Service served under temporary contracts that cannot exceed a continuous period of 11 months. While temporary appointments provide more flexibility for rotating Professional staff between the field and Headquarters, OIOS believes that a larger proportion of such posts should be filled through the normal recruitment process (that is, through the Appointment and Promotion Board or the National Competitive Examination) based on specific competencies and skills required for the posts. This would result in employing better-qualified staff to handle recruitment activities and would create a more favourable climate for promoting best recruitment practices. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations clarified that it was no longer hiring recruitment officers on a temporary basis and that the four new recruitment officers who joined in 2001 were either appointed through the Appointment and Promotion Board or the National Competitive Examination process.*

B. Written procedures for mission appointment

38. The Personnel Management and Support Service had not formulated written procedures for the recruitment process. According to the web page of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the recruitment process consists of screening applications, competitive ranking of candidates' qualifications and experience, interviewing, verification of qualifications and employment history and selection by a committee. However, there was no standard operating procedure or manual documenting these procedures and requiring their implementation. The only documentation available on the recruitment process was limited to some training material and a user-guide for processing applications. Written procedures for mission appointment should have been prepared when recruitment authority was delegated to the Department, but this was not done.

39. The consequences of the lack of written procedures manifested themselves in a number of ways. Roster searches were not conducted; selection was not based on an evaluation of competing candidates; the selection committee approach was not used to reach recruitment decisions; missions were not always consulted before selection; candidates were not interviewed telephonically or otherwise except to ascertain their availability and to finalize their itinerary; and reference checks did not take place on a regular basis.

40. The absence of written procedures exposes the recruitment process to inconsistency and arbitrariness and raises doubts about whether it is geared towards selecting the best available candidates in a fair and transparent manner. The need for written procedures becomes even more important in light of the proposed delegation of recruitment authority to field missions as recommended by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations.[1] *The former Chief of the Personnel Management and Support Service commented that written procedures did exist, but were "deliberately streamlined" to enable acceleration of the recruitment process during periods of competing demands from field missions.* In the opinion of OIOS, however, the so-called existing written procedures related mainly to operating the "peacekeeping database" and were not comprehensive. They do not indicate the responsibilities of the various officials involved in the recruitment process. Since the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are cooperating in implementing the new "Galaxy system", a comprehensive standard operating procedure/manual needs to be prepared for use by the Department recruitment officers and by field missions having delegated recruitment authority.

C. Benchmarking and performance evaluation

41. The Personnel Management and Support Service had not developed benchmarks for evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of its recruitment activities. The absence of benchmarks could be attributed to the lack of written recruitment procedures — since standard practices have not been established, no evaluation was possible. In the view of OIOS, benchmarks need to be developed by considering factors such as the mission vacancy rates, filling critical mission vacancies, and optimal turnaround times for sourcing, evaluating, selecting and deploying international civilian staff to missions. Performance evaluation gauged against established benchmarks would also help the Personnel Management and Support Service to justify the resource requirements for managing its recruitment functions.

D. Segregation of duties

42. The recruitment function involves various officials within and outside of the Personnel Management and Support Service. Internally, several units/officials participate in the recruitment process, including the Roster Unit, responsible recruitment officers in the Staffing Support Section and their supervisors at different levels, including the Chief of the Service. Selection decisions must also involve field missions and the respective substantive offices/departments at Headquarters. However, there was no clear segregation of duties to be performed within the Personnel Management and Support Service and by the field missions and substantive departments/offices. The OIOS review showed that selection decisions were generally made by the Service without asking field missions to select suitable candidates from a shortlist. Consequently, field missions sometimes expressed dissatisfaction with the candidates recruited by the Service.

43. In the view of OIOS, proper segregation of duties is important to protect the integrity of the recruitment process and to reach informed selection decisions. The practices followed by the Personnel Management and Support Service were not adequate to support the full delegation of selection decisions to programme managers (in this instance, the field missions) as envisaged in the Organization's human resources management reforms. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations clarified that, in February 2001, segregation of duties had been formally established and that, as a result, administrative authority was allocated among the various officials within the Personnel Management and Support Service. The Department has also increasingly involved missions in reaching selection decisions since the latter part of 2000.*

E. Documentation in personnel files

44. The documentation in the personnel files of mission appointees was not always complete: for example, out of the 213 case files reviewed, 25 had no selection memoranda and, in 63 cases, salary recommendations were missing. Consequently, the paper trail was not always clear, thereby increasing the risk of recruiting candidates without proper internal approvals. To some extent, this problem can be attributed to the large volume of mission appointments that were processed during the period. Nevertheless, the Personnel Management and Support Service needs to ensure that documentation in personnel files is complete and current.

F. Analysing staff turnover

45. The Personnel Management and Support Service's workload often increased owing to the high turnover of mission staff, requiring it to recruit replacements for those who left the mission within a short time. In UNTAET, for example, 108 staff members (approximately 9 per cent of the authorized strength) had departed the mission within six months of their initial appointment. Since there was no procedure for analysing staff turnover, it remained unclear whether the high turnover was due to controllable factors such as grievances concerning salary level or morale problems. Consequently, the Service could not determine possible remedial measures to reduce staff turnover.

46. The management letter from the United Nations Board of Auditors of October 2000 on its audit of UNTAET noted that, effective July 2000, UNTAET had been requesting departing staff members to fill out exit interview questionnaires for further analysis by the Mission. At the time of the OIOS audit, the results of the analysis were unavailable. In the view of OIOS, the Personnel Management and Support Service should institute a procedure to systematically obtain feedback from departing staff members through exit interviews/surveys in all peacekeeping missions.

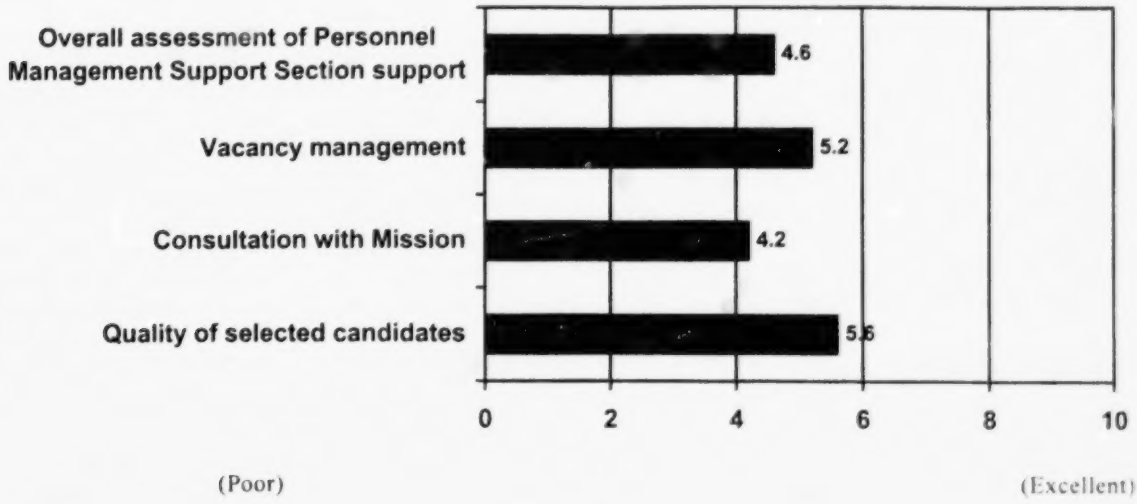
V. Results of client satisfaction survey

47. In January 2001, OIOS requested feedback from the Heads of 10 peacekeeping and other special missions[6] to assess their satisfaction with the staffing support provided by the Personnel Management and Support Service. Responses were received from nine missions. Figure I below summarizes the main results of the survey.

48. The survey indicated that field missions expect better staffing support from the Personnel Management and Support Service and a greater degree of involvement in the process of selecting mission appointees. Comments from missions responses included the following:

- "A major problem with the current Headquarters-based system of recruitment is that the mission is excluded from the selection process, resulting in unsuitable or unqualified candidates being recruited";
- "The Personnel Management and Support Service should engage in dialogue with missions — that way they would understand better the needs of the mission and the missions will also understand better the constraints being faced by the Service";
- "Staffing support could be improved by quicker turnaround of responses to requests from the mission. There are currently several cases that have been pending for several months";
- "The Personnel Management and Support Service is under-staffed and there are overwhelming demands placed upon it";
- "Grading system of the Personnel Management and Support Service is not consistent";
- "Very often we have come across staff members assigned to functions they had not performed before or in which they do not have training, with the resultant lack of effective performance";
- "Delegation of authority ... would lead to a lot of pressure to recruit from the same regional/national groups ... [this] needs more thought";
- "The solution is not delegation of recruitment to missions, as we do not have [the] necessary databank for suitable candidates and the appropriate logistical support for this. We are still better off being serviced by the Personnel Management and Support Service. The answer lies in finding a way to assist the Service to improve its delivery of services".

Figure I
Mission assessment of the staffing support provided by the Personnel Management and Support Service
(on a scale of 0 to 10)



49. Of the nine missions that responded to the survey, four stated that their operations were significantly affected by the staffing vacancy rate. Seven missions felt that their needs would be better served if recruitment authority were delegated to them. However, eight missions indicated that they would need additional resources to implement this delegation — five missions stated that they would need qualified recruitment staff to do the job, while three missions requested training for their existing recruitment staff. In the opinion of OIOS, before the authority to recruit international civilian staff is fully delegated to field missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations needs to ensure that qualified recruitment officers are deployed in the affected missions so that the delegated authority will be exercised responsibly and with transparency. Existing mission staff also need to be trained to properly implement the delegation of authority.

VI. Recommendations

50. OIOS made the following recommendations to improve the practices and procedures for recruiting international civilian staff for peacekeeping and other special missions and to enable the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to meet its staffing needs more effectively. Comments received from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of Human Resources Management on the implementation status of the recommendations are summarized after each recommendation.

Recommendation 1

51. **The Office of Human Resources Management should implement an effective monitoring mechanism to ensure that the recruitment authority delegated to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is exercised with transparency and in accordance with the human resources policies of the Organization. Further delegation of recruitment authority to field missions should only be made after such a monitoring mechanism is put in place (AP2000/5/1/1).**

52. *The Office of Human Resources Management accepted this recommendation and stated that it is seeking additional resources from the support account for peacekeeping operations to establish a special monitoring and assistance service for monitoring the authority delegated to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and field missions. The Department commented that it strongly encourages closer monitoring of the recruitment process by the Office of Human Resources Management, as well as the introduction of checks and balances for*

achieving transparency and fairness through systematic review of individual recruitment cases.

Recommendations 2 and 3

53. **To facilitate the recruitment of the best available candidates and to promote transparency and fairness in the process, the Personnel Management and Support Service should establish a dedicated team to develop, in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management, a functional roster of qualified, pre-screened candidates for mission service (AP2000/5/1/2).**

54. **Once such a roster is established, the Personnel Management and Support Service should review it on an ongoing basis to ensure that an adequate number of candidates are available for each category of posts at any given point of time. If necessary, applications for such posts should be invited through the web site of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and by other sources such as Member States and organizations within the United Nations system (AP2000/5/1/3).**

55. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted these recommendations and commented that the creation of a roster of pre-certified candidates was crucial in order to achieve transparency and enable delegation of recruitment authority to missions. The Office of Human Resources Management commented that its joint efforts with the Department in this respect were ongoing and that their cooperation was very close and productive.*

Recommendation 4

56. **The Personnel Management and Support Service should develop standard job descriptions for all peacekeeping and other special mission posts to ensure that selection decisions are based on a clear understanding of the functions and responsibilities associated with such posts. Furthermore, the job descriptions should be posted on the web site of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to assist candidates seeking opportunities for mission service (AP2000/5/1/4).**

57. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation. The Office of Human Resources Management clarified that it was working with the Department in the development of standard job descriptions for various mission posts.*

Recommendation 5

58. **The Personnel Management and Support Service should introduce a procedure for shortlisting suitable candidates as a basis for selecting the best candidate for the post. The selection decision should indicate how the candidate was selected and should state whether any of the candidates not selected in the first instance should be placed on a reserve list for consideration when a vacancy arises for a similar post (AP2000/5/1/5).**

59. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation. The Office of Human Resources Management commented that the implementation of the Galaxy project would provide all required functionalities to significantly streamline the evaluation, selection and appointment processes.*

Recommendation 6

60. **To promote transparency and fairness in determining the salary levels of mission appointees, the Personnel Management and Support Service should apply the grading criteria consistently. Reasons for any deviation from these criteria should be documented. In situations where it is not possible to recommend the appropriate grade owing to the non-availability of a post at that level, the candidate should be adequately compensated by the granting of a higher step(s) within the grade to which she/he is appointed (AP2000/5/1/6).**

61. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation.*

Recommendation 7

62. **The Personnel Management and Support Service should ensure that reference checks of candidates' educational qualifications and work experience are completed before they are appointed for mission service. If this is not possible due to exigencies, reference checks should be completed before extending initial appointments (AP2000/5/1/7).**

63. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation and stated that candidates should be placed on the recruitment roster after reference checks have been conducted.*

Recommendation 8

64. **The Personnel Management and Support Service should delegate the task of arranging the travel of international civilian staff to the concerned field mission wherever economical and feasible (AP2000/5/1/8).**

65. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations agreed with the recommendation and clarified that travel to the mission areas for appointees to the transitional administration components of UNMIK and UNTAET had already been delegated to those missions.*

Recommendation 9

66. **To enable it to better manage its recruitment functions, the Personnel Management and Support Service should undertake a review of its staff resources and strengthen its case for additional resources by: (a) providing full justification based on reliable workload indicators and benchmarks; and (b) preparing a risk analysis highlighting the potential impact of lower resource levels (AP2000/5/1/9).**

67. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted the recommendation and stated that the report of external consultants on the "comprehensive review" of peacekeeping operations will be used to develop workload indicators and benchmarks to justify the resource requirements.*

Recommendation 10

68. **The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should ensure that a larger proportion of recruitment officers for its Personnel Management and Support Service are appointed through the Appointment and Promotion Board and/or the National Competitive Examination process (AP2000/5/1/10).**

69. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations clarified that it was no longer hiring recruitment officers on a temporary basis. The four new recruitment officers who reported in 2001 were either appointed through the National Competitive Examination process or the Appointment and Promotion Board.*

Recommendation 11

70. **To bring about a greater degree of consistency and transparency in its recruitment process, the Personnel Management and Support Service should prepare a comprehensive standard operating procedure or manual detailing the procedures for recruiting candidates for mission assignment (AP2000/5/1/11).**

71. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation.*

Recommendation 12

72. **The Personnel Management and Support Service, in consultation with the Office of Human Resources Management, should develop benchmarks for evaluating the efficiency of its recruitment activities (AP2000/5/1/12).**

73. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation and commented that the report of the external consultants resulting from the "comprehensive review" of peacekeeping operations will be used to develop benchmarks.*

Recommendation 13

74. **To ensure the integrity of the recruitment process, the Personnel Management and Support Service should segregate the responsibilities of the various departments, offices and officials associated with the process. This should include the full delegation of selection decisions to field missions in accordance with the Organization's reforms in human resources management (AP2000/5/1/13).**

75. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted the recommendation and clarified that for new missions, implementation of the recommendation of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations concerning the early establishment of core leadership would allow for involvement of the mission in selecting staff much earlier in the process, without significantly delaying deployment.*

Recommendation 14

76. **The Personnel Management and Support Service should ensure that documentation in the personnel files of mission appointees is complete and up-to-date. This requirement should also be incorporated in the standard operating procedure or manual to be prepared for the recruitment process (AP2000/5/1/14).**

77. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation.*

Recommendation 15

78. **To address the negative impact of staff turnover on missions operations, the Personnel Management and Support Service should introduce procedures for carrying out exit interviews. The results of such exit interviews should be analysed and used to reduce staff turnover (AP2000/5/1/15).**

79. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted the recommendation.*

Recommendation 16

80. **To ensure that the delegated recruitment authority is exercised properly and in a transparent manner, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should deploy qualified human resource specialists to the affected missions and provide necessary training to existing recruitment staff in the missions before such delegation is accorded (AP2000/5/1/16).**

81. *The Department of Peacekeeping Operations accepted this recommendation.*

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General
Office of Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] A/55/305-S/2000/809.

[2] A/49/959, para. 48 (o).

[3] A/55/507/Add.1.

[4] A/49/959, para. 39.

[5] A/49/904, A/50/897, A/51/906 and Corr.1 and A/52/892.

[6] The 10 missions surveyed were the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), MONUC, UNAMSIL, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), UNMEE, the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), UNMIK, the United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (UNOHCI), the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and UNTAET.